

OCT 12 2001

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2 MR. BENEZET: Thank you. I'm from Pioche, as  
3 Marge said --

4 MODERATOR BROWN: Can you lift the mike up a  
5 little bit?

6 MR. BENEZET: I'm Louis Benezet. I'm from  
7 Pioche. My mother was born in the town, so I have a  
8 right to consider myself an old-timer.

9 Marge and I got interested in this issue in  
10 Lincoln County when our County Commissioners and the  
11 Mayor of Caliente passed resolutions expressing their  
12 willingness to accept nuclear waste facilities in  
13 Lincoln County and nuclear waste transportation  
14 alternatives in Lincoln County in exchange for benefits  
15 payments. From that time, we've been fighting to bring  
16 our elected officials in line.

17 We have a little bit of problem with them  
18 because they belong to a school of thought that  
19 believes that when the elected officials have spoke,  
20 the thinking has been done. We don't subscribe to that  
21 thought ourselves. Personally, I think that the  
22 thinking isn't done until the people are heard from and  
23 that's what I stand for.

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24 I've heard a lot of people talk tonight and  
25 some of them take a different view from my own view.

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1 Personally, I'm against Yucca Mountain. I'm opposed to  
2 the proliferation of nuclear waste by continued  
3 dependence on nuclear energy. I believe that we can  
4 live within our means and find ways of avoiding the  
5 production of nuclear waste through conservation and  
6 alternative energy sources.

7 I also believe that people that I disagree  
8 with have a right to speak, too, and I've heard  
9 comments heard tonight that I may not agree with but I  
10 agree with the right of people to bring their comments  
11 before everybody and have a forum on it. One of the  
12 things that has been the focus of our efforts recently  
13 is to get a level of accounting from our Nuclear Waste  
14 Committee as Marge Detraz said and we're continuing to  
15 work on it.

16 I'll tell you one thing, that in 1995, the  
17 Mayor of Caliente went to Washington and told them that  
18 our Governor and our Senators and so forth was merely  
19 postering for political gain in imposing Yucca Mountain  
20 and I don't believe he would make a statement like that

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21 now. We've had two political campaigns in Lincoln  
22 County. We've had a survey effort that Marge  
23 mentioned. We've gone to the County Commissioners and  
24 got them to draft a new resolution, which while it  
25 doesn't go as far as we say, it expresses concerns

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1 about minimizing transportation of nuclear waste  
2 through Lincoln County.  
3 We've continued to go to all their meetings  
4 and say we want an accounting on your trips. We know  
5 you've been to Washington four trips this year. Why  
6 don't you report on these trips? Why are we still  
7 employing Robison and Seidler, who works for the DOE.  
8 Why is our program being run this way? Why can't we  
9 ask questions in meetings?

10 It's an uphill battle and it's taken a lot of  
11 time and energy and our own money and we don't have the  
12 three-quarters of a million dollar that JCCIAAC has to  
13 expend, but we're continuing to fight it and I  
14 absolutely believe in citizen effort.

15 I don't know what life is like here in Nye  
16 County as far as the people who are trying to get their  
17 views across and trying to influence their leaders on

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18 Yucca Mountain and other issues, but I would encourage  
19 people to be involved because I think you will be  
20 pleased with the results over time. But it takes time.

21       Among the things that -- to change the  
22 subject slightly -- that I've thought about, I've made  
23 many comments on Yucca Mountain and I'm not going to  
24 dwell too much on the details of the dump. One of the  
25 things that's always intrigued and puzzled me and

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1 interested me is the whole question of time. We know  
2 that we're dealing with a project that has to take into  
3 consideration huge time frames. And it boggles the  
4 mind really in terms of dealing with it.

5       Some of the comments that I've heard tonight  
6 refer to that problem in a number of ways, speaking  
7 both of time present and time past. One of the people  
8 who spoke earlier tonight was from the Harry Reid  
9 center at the university, commenting in general that  
10 there is a nuclear power renaissance on the horizon and  
11 that we would need it and that we should rely on it and  
12 that one, he prefaced his statement by saying that  
13 people that don't have enough electricity don't live as  
14 long basically, that electricity is good for us and so

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15 forth.

16 I think -- I have a boom box. I like to  
17 listen to my classical music. I would probably have to  
18 simply play my piano if I didn't have my boom box, but  
19 that would probably be a reasonable alternative for me.  
20 But I appreciate what electricity does for us. But I  
21 think in this country of ours, we can conserve. We can  
22 live with less, if necessary, until we transition to  
23 alternate energy sources. I would like to remind you  
24 that the founding fathers who created this country did  
25 not do it with electric light bulbs or electric

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1 equipment. Mozart did not write his symphonies or "The  
2 Marriage of Figaro" on electronic equipment. Voltaire  
3 wrote everything with a pen and pencil. Life without  
4 electricity isn't necessarily totally impoverished,  
5 even though we like it.

6 MODERATOR BROWN: You got about a minute  
7 left.

8 MR. BENEZET: I'd like to say about time  
9 future, one of the time future increments, not just the  
10 10,000 years that we're dealing with, has to do with  
11 the changing target which is Yucca Mountain. And in

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12 the more recent supplements to Environmental Impact

13 Statements, they looked at alternatives to deal with

14 problems they didn't fix the first time around.

15 One has to do with handling the heat

16 generated by the nuclear waste. That's led to

17 different configurations and longer spans of keeping

18 Yucca Mountain open for monitoring and so forth. If I

19 read the document correctly, there was a statement in

20 there at one point at least under one of the scenarios

21 which said that the repository would be kept open for

22 300 years, at which time the Secretary of Energy would

23 initiate the closure process or, that is to say, the

24 secretary of the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, I

25 believe. At any rate, that boggled my mind.

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1 Even considering the longevity of most

2 bureaucratic institutions that I'm aware of, 300 years

3 strikes me as a rather remarkable thing. I try to

4 picture what this country will be like 300 years from

5 now and what some clerk will, perhaps doing some

6 archive work, come across the directive that something

7 needs to be done and send some sort of a message to the

8 area which we call Yucca Mountain in whatever

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9 jurisdiction it might be and wonder what political  
10 system it might happen to be, is hard to imagine who  
11 will be here, many or few. But maybe the noble say,  
12 gee, I think I've figured out where all that bad water  
13 is coming from.  
14 Thank you.

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MR. BENEZET: My name is Louie Benezet from

12 Pioche, Nevada. I wanted to share with you the  
13 information that has been published on a Citizen Alert  
14 fact sheet, which states, "Lessons learned from New  
15 Mexico's experience with the DOE regarding the waste  
16 isolation pilot plan. WIPP." As you know, they have a  
17 nuclear waste repository that's been constructed that  
18 is supposed to receive shipments from all over, I  
19 believe mostly defense-related wastes. On, in one of  
20 the statements that it makes in this fact sheet, which  
21 is available over on the table with other information  
22 from Citizen Alert, people who think that negotiating  
23 with DOE or the industry is a good idea need to  
24 understand that once Yucca Mountain gets the go-ahead  
25 and waste begins to flow, there's no longer any

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1 incentive for Congress to live up to any commitments  
2 made for compensating the state or local governments.  
3 One needs only to look at the situation New Mexico  
4 finds itself in with regard to the WIPP project.  
5 New Mexico early on negotiated with DOE to  
6 accept the WIPP nuclear waste facility in exchange for



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7 promises of funds for roads and other things. Only New  
8 Mexico ever got was a few million dollars for highway  
9 improvements, money the state probably would have goen  
10 any way from the Federal Highway Trust Fund. DOE  
11 reneged on every other commitment.

12 In addition, DOE continues to hold the  
13 promised highway funds hostage whenever New Mexico  
14 complains about health and safety violations at WIPP.  
15 The summary of findings, lessons learned from New  
16 Mexico's experience. Lesson one: In response to  
17 stateholder pressure, the DOE will renege on its  
18 commitments over time.

19 Lesson two: DOE has a consistent track  
20 record of not living up to its agreements with states  
21 and local governments, even court-ordered written  
22 agreements. Based on this finding, DOE will try to  
23 renege on agreements that it makes with Clark County  
24 and the State of Nevada as soon as it can achieve its  
25 goals.

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1 Lesson three: The window of opportunity to  
2 influence -- the window of opportunity, to influence  
3 the regulatory framework that will govern DOE's

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4 activities, is short. And will close once Congress  
5 accepts a recommendation to go forward with the  
6 repository.

7 Lesson four: DOE's systems for protecting  
8 the public health and safety are inadequate.

9 Lesson five: DOE's WIPP transportation  
10 training and tracking systems are inadequate for  
11 protecting public health and safety.

12 Lessons six: Transcom, transportation  
13 tracking system, is out of date, and inadequate. This  
14 is taken from a January report this year entitled  
15 "Lessons learned from New Mexico's experience with the  
16 development of the nuclear waste repository." The  
17 report was contracted by Clark County's Department of  
18 Comprehensive Planning, Nuclear Waste Division, and I  
19 assume you can get the report from Clark County, but  
20 you can also get it from Citizen Alert, and the  
21 information on Citizen Alert is on the bottom of this  
22 flyer, that you can get over there. Thank you.